

Draft - Minutes

The Park and Recreation Committee met on April 6, 2009 with eight members present with the following agenda:

- I. Discuss and Vote on Animal Control Ordinance
- II. Approve minutes from December 15, 2009 meeting
- III. Chairman's Report

Chairman Russell called the meeting to order and introduced the first agenda item, voting on the Animal Control Ordinance. There were ten (10) members of the public present. Chairman Russell explained that the TGS&A committee was asked to come up with a dog control ordinance for the whole town. She explained that the Park and Recreation commission has the right to modify and amend the rules for a particular park such as times of the day in a particular park when dogs can be off the leash.

Committee member asked for further clarification on what the Park and Recreation committee members were voting on and the subsequent actions that the Park and Recreation could take.

Chairman Russell read through the proposed ordinance with further discussion on various elements of the ordinance with a particular question from the committee as to the history of what led to this ordinance being proposed. A committee member proposed modifying the language in paragraph "C. Exceptions" with regard to including all dogs "under the jurisdiction of town officials" such as police dogs or fire rescue dogs. There was discussion as to the language concerning removal of feces from public property, but was later concluded to leave the original language.

A committee member asked if there had been any existing rules in place prior to this ordinance, it was explained that rules were in place for certain locations such as no dogs allowed on town beaches, with or without leashes. Certain parks have leash rules as well as rules requiring dogs being under the control of their owners. Chairman Russell explained that this ordinance will apply uniformly across all public property.

A member of the public, Lea Beckman, commented that dog laws should be enforceable and agrees with a leash law. But she added that what is required instead is a properly fenced-in dog park. She asked that a dog ordinance should not be voted on until such a dog park is in place.

Chairman Russell responded with an explanation of the Park and Recreation committee's efforts over the past six years to establish a dog park. She explained that the budget line item never made it through the budget process and that it would be difficult to get the budget item passed during this economic environment. Further discussion ensued with regard to a public/private partnership and the process to establish a 501C3 fund to raise tax free money for a dog park.

Member of the public, Lea Beckman, made a follow-up comment that before raising money, it would be necessary to have all approvals in place. Chairman Russell explained that voting on the ordinance should not be held back by the establishment of a dog park.

Member of the public Shelley Carder commented that there was disappointment that this meeting was scheduled during the public school holiday at which time many who are concerned about the animal control ordinance would be unable to attend. She also commented that it was very difficult to find out which committee as well as when or where the meeting was scheduled to be held. There was concern amongst the general public that should the ordinance be accepted by the Park and Recreation Committee, the laws would be in force the next day. It was explained by Chairman Russell and members of the committee that there would be the opportunity at the full RTM meeting to voice concerns about the ordinance.

Member of the public, Debbie Hartman, asked if there had been any instance of dogs biting a child. Members of the committee responded with examples given by the animal control officer and Captain Komm during a previous meeting. There are no statistics, but members of the committee agreed that it would not require statistics to make this an important issue to address.

Member of the public, Don Smith, asked for further details, who to contact regarding setting up the 501C3 for a dog park. Chairman Russell provided examples of past 501C3 organizations and who to contact.

There was a question of whether the board of education should be included in this debate since they have jurisdiction over rules governing the school fields. Chairman Russell stated as far as she knew, they had not come forward to comment on the ordinance.

The committee discussed and finalized the changes to language in the ordinance.

Chairman Russell requested a motion to accept the revised draft of the Proposed Dog Control Ordinance (dated 3/17/09) as further modified by the Park and Recreation committee. There was a second. The Park and Recreation committee unanimously voted in favor of accepting the Proposed Dog Control Ordinance (8-0).

Further items discussed were the approval of the December 15, 2008 minutes by all members present. During the Chairman's report, the committee voted in favor of adding the agenda item to approve the September 9, 2008 minutes. Those minutes were approved by all 8 members present. The Chairman reported that there was nothing new to report regarding the flood mitigation at Baker Park.

Meeting was adjourned